COMMERCIAL RELATIONS OF INDIA IN THE MIDDLE AGES
OR
THE RISE OF ISLAM AND THE EXPANSION OF WESTERN EUROPE

The birth of Islam is synchronous with the consolidation of Papal power in Rome under Gregory the Great. It was the era of theocracies and the east was once more spreading a wave of religion that had almost succeeded in Mohomedanizing the entire continent of Europe. Not to speak of Africa and Asia and like many big things ; it had its origin in the small.

Long before Muhamad's birth, Arabia was inhabited by different tribes and enjoyed the prosperity of being the commercial go-between between the East and the West. This early prosperity of the Arabs is attested to by the ruins of rich and splendid cities lined from Petra to Damascus; but according to Strabo, this source of prosperity to the Arabs early dried up when the Romans opened direct trade to India. The products of India and Arabia passed to Myos Hormos on the western shore of the Red Sea and camels to Thebes and thence sailed down to Alexandria through the Nile. As a result of this, the Arabs were reduced to be "the true sons of the desert".

Economically there is no country so poor as Arabia. Arabia, the sandy, stony and happy as Gibbon calls it. Owing to the scarcity of arable land and water, the Arabs could not become a settled people. They continued to be nomads and tribal, having no unity in religion or politics. Owing to their disunion,the Arabs were overrun by foreign invaders many a time. The Abyssinians, the Persians, the Sultans of Egypt and the Turks, all in their turn subjugated the kingdom of Yemen, many a Sythian tyrrant had demanded the allegiance of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and Arabia in part became the province of the Roman empire.

None was able to subdue the Arabs permanently and they have overthrown the suzereinty of powerful monarchs like Sesostris, Cyrcs, Pompey and Trojan. "The causes of this apparent spirit of independence among the Arabs are to be sought in the geography of their habitat.

Crude and inartistic as was the paganism of the Arabs ritual pomp, elaborate mythology or high philosophical speculation had no place in it. " The Religion of the Arabs, as well as of the Indians consisted in the worship of the Sun, the Moon, and the fixed stars." [f1] "Each tribe, each family, each independent warrior, created and changed the rites and the object of his fantastic worship; but the nation, in every age, has bowed to the religion as well as to the language of Mecca."[f2] The conversion of pagan to a new religion is never a hard task, for, pagans are anything but fanatic and most tolerant. The pagan Arabs were living in peaceful relations with the Christian communities in the North and at Najran in the South, with the Jewish communities residing in the North-

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east and the Zoroastrians living in close proximity to the Persian Gulf. As a result of this propinquity, the interchange of ideas had been working towards a spiritual monotheism among the Arabs long before the birth of Muhamad and is typified by the Hanifs.

Independently or otherwise of the Hanafi movement, Muhamad, an Arab camel driver, conceived the idea of improving the lot of the degraded Arabs constantly fighting among themselves and offering human sacrifices to the numerous idols in Caaba. No man ever arrogated to himself the virtue of being a Prophet with so little equipment, but he made bold and the faith which, under the name of Islam, he preached to his family and nation is compounded of an eternal truth and a necessary fiction. " *That there is only one God, and that Mahomet is the apostle of God. "*[f3] The circumstances of Muhamed's birth are seemingly favourable to his proclamation as a Prophet. It will be remembered that Arabia was populated by various tribes all enjoying equal independence. All these tribe" however united to respect the tribe of Koresh which by means, fair or foul, held the custody of the temple of Caaba and the Sacerdotal office of worshipping Caaba had fallen on the family of the Hashemites, chiefly on the grandfather of Mahomed. Taking advantage of his exalted position among the Arabs, Mohomed commenced the preaching of the monotheistic Gospel. There isn't anything new in the Gospel of Mohomed who is the least original of the Prophet. His Koran is acompromise between Judaeism and Christianity. Whatever may be the value of his teachings, the Arabs looked upon it with the utmost hostility, so much so that the Hashemites were lowered in the estimation of their people. The stubbornness of the Arabs grew with the missionary zeal of Mahomed as that of the Hindoos today with the growth of the missionary propaganda. Becoming impatient, the Arabs compelled the Hashemites to expell Mohamed whose very life was near being threatened; Mahomed centred his attention on Medina but was not sure of welcome. He therefore negotiated with the Medinites through the few disciples he had made in Mecca. After being assured of their kindness, he stationed himself at Medina and saved his cherished and young religion from utter ruin, which would certainly " have perished in its cradle, had not Medina embraced with faith and reverence the holy outcasts of Mecca."[f4] His stationing at Medina was of immense advantage to Mohamed. To his sacerdotal office was combined the regal and to the judicial, the executive. He became a missionary monarch strong enough to back his preaching by the cannon. " The choice of an independent people had exalted the fugitive of Mecca to the rank of a sovereign and he was invested with the just prerogative of forming alliances and of waging offensive and defensive wars. The imperfection of human rights was supplied and armed by the plentitude of divine power. The Prophet of Medina assured, in his new revelations, a fiercer and more sanguinary tone, which proves that his former moderation was the effect of weakness. The means of persuation had been tried, the season of forbearance was elapsed, and he was now commanded to propagate his religion by the sword, to destroy the monuments of idolatory, and without regarding the sanctity of days, or months, to pursue the

unbelieving nations of the Earth." [f5]So stationed, he began the expansion of his creed and kingdom, first by subjugating the? Koreish of Mecca. The Arabs were both merchants and robbers in one, and the disciple of Muhamed at Medina began to harrass the trade of the Koreish passing through Medina. The Koreish, being exasperated at this, began warring against Medina. Muhamed, for a while, was on the defensive but he soon got on the offensive and subjugated the city of his birth. Thus he augmented both his forces and resources. " The fair option of friendship, or submission, or battle, was proposed to the enemies of Mahomet. If they professed the creed of Islam, they were admitted to all the temporal and spiritual benefits of his primitive disciples, and marched under the same banner to extend the religion which they had embraced."[f6] Having thus equipped his followers for a career of conquest, Mohamed left his mission to his successors, the Califs. " The heroic courage of Ali, the consumate prudence of Moawiyah, excited the emulation of their subjects, and the talents which had been exercised in the schools of civil discord were more usefully applied to propagate the faith and dominion of the Prophet. In the sloth and vanity of the palace of Damascus, the succeeding princes of the house of Ommiyah were alike, destitute of the qualifications of statesmen and of saints. Yet the spoils of the unknown nations were continually laid at the foot of their throne, and the uniform ascent of the Arabian greatness must be ascribed to the spirit of the nadon rather than the abilities of their chiefs. A large deduction must be allowed for the weakness of their enemies. The birth of Mahomet was fortunately placed in the most degenerate and disorderly period of the Persians, the Romans, and the barbarians of Europe. The empire of Trojan, or even of Constantine or Charlemagne, would have repelled the attack of the naked Saracens, and the torrent of fanaticism might have been obscurely lost in the sands of Arabia."[f7]„ With the same vigour and success they invaded the successors of Augustus and those of Artaxerxtus : and the rival monarchies at the same instant became. The prey of an enemy whom they had been so long accustomed to despise. In the ten years of the administration of Omar, the Saracens reduced to his obedience thirty-six thousand cities or castles, destroyed fourteen thousand churches or temples of the unbelievers, and edified fourteen thousand mosques for the exercise of the religion of Mahomet. One hundred years after his flight in Mecca, the arms and the reign of his successors extended from India to the Adantic ocean, over the various and distant provinces which may be comprised under the names of (1) Persia, (2) Syria, (3) Egypt, (4) Africa, (5) Spain"[f8] In this great Mahomedan empire, "We should vainly seek the indissoluble union and easy obedience that pervaded the government of Augustus and the Antonines; but the progress of the Mahomedan religion diffused over this ample space, a general resemblance of manners and opinions. The language and laws of the Koran were studied with equal devotion at Samarkand and Seville. The Moor and the Indian embraced as countrymen and brothers in the pilgrimage of Mecca; and the Arabian language was adopted as the popular idiom in all the provinces to the westward of the

Tigris."[f9]

The entire trade of history has been to account for his Saracen expansion purely and simply by Religion; but an economic interpretation of this same phenomenon may also stand the test. A well-known writer says " The sudden surging forward of the Arabs was only apparently sudden. For centuries previously, the Arab migration had been in preparation. It was the last great Semitic migration connected with the Economical decline of Arabia..... In short, long before Mahomet, Arabia was in a state of unrest, and a slow, uncontrolled infiltration of Arabian tribes and tribal branches had permeated the adjoining civilized lands in Persian as also in the Roman territory, where they had met with the descendents of earlier Semitic immigrants to those parts, the Armaneans who were already long acclamatised there.

Hunger and avarice, not religion, are the impelling forces, but religion supplied the essential unity and central power. The expansion of the Saracens* Religion, both in point of time and in itself, can only be regarded as of minor import and rather as a political necessity. The movement itself had been on foot long before Islam gave it a party cry and an Organisation."[f10]

Prompted both by the ardour of spreading a new religion and also by the economic forces of the time, within forty-six years after Mahomet's flight from Mecca, the new converts to Muhamedanism appeared in arms before the walls of Constantinople and besieged it (in A. D. 668-675). The seige lasted for 7 years without any decisive result, the beseigers made light of the strength and resources of Constantinople. The Romans rose equal to the danger of their religion and empire and met the onrushing Saracens with numbers and discipline with so much heroism that it revived their population in the East and the West and for awhile, eclipsed the triumphs of the Saracens, who, had they succeeded in capturing Constantinople, would certainly have jeopardised the prospects of Christianity.

The Saracens invaded Constantinople a second time and besieged it (A. D. 716-718) but with the same result

Amidst all these triumphs, the Arabs were being gradually eclipsed by the Seljuks. At the time of their rise, the authority of Quaim, the Abbaside Caliph of Baghdad, was completely overshadowed, first by the Sheite dynasty of the Buyids, and afterwards by the more formidable Fatimite rivals. Placed in such circumstances, the Abbaside Caliph welcomed the rise of the Seljuk Turks, who being the upholders of orthodox Islam were sure to reinvest him all his former power and grandeur. " It is their merit from a Mahommedan point of view to have re-established the power of orthodox Islam and delivered the Moslem world from the subversive influence of the ultra-Sheite tenets, which constituted a serious danger to the duration of Islam itself. Neither had civilization anything to fear from them, since they represented a strong neutral power which made the intimate union of Persian and Arabian elements possible, almost at the expense of the national-Turkish-literary monuments in that language being during the whole period

of the Seljuk rule exceedingly rare. "[f11] The Seljuks comprised innumerable tribes or families, one of which was known as the Guzz. Among these constantly contending partics, the Guzz family, not in good graces of the rest, rose to power and became a menace to the neighbouring Mohomedan provinces.

Under the leadership of Pigu Arstan Israil, they crossed the Oxus and spread over the Eastern provinces of Persia and having defeated Mahamud, the Gaznavite king in the battle of Mero in 1040, they proclaimed their independence. Within a very short time, the Seljuks secured pre-eminance in the whole of central Asia as far as the Hellespont. " After the great victory of Alp Arsia in which the Greek emperor was taken prisoner (1071), Asia minor lay open to the inroads of the Turks. Hence it was easy for Suleiman, the son of Kutulmish, the son of Arstan Pigu (Israil), to penetrate as far as the Hellespont, the more so after the captivity of Romanas' two rivals, Nicephorus Bryennius in Asia and NicephorusBotanciates in Europe, disputed the throne with one another. The former appealed to Suleiman for assistance, and was by his aid brought to Constantinople and seated on the imperial throne."[f12] Within a short time they captured Anttioch to give permanance to their Syrian monarchy and brilliantly carried their arms to such an extent by 1234 that the Seljukian empire included almost the whole of Asia minor.

But the Seljukian empire was bound to be short-lived, both because of internal dissensions and external aggressions. The external aggression of the Seljukian empire was headed by the Mongols. The early history of the Mongols is enveloped by obscurity and legend. Chengizkhan, the hero of the Mongols, at his death in the valley of Kilien in 1227 " left to his sons an empire which stretched from the China sea to the banks of the Dnieper ."[f13] Chengizkhan appointed Ogdai as the Khakan or his successor and gave parts of his extensive dominion to other claimants. Ogdai tried to extend his dominion. " At the head of a large army, he marched southwards into China to complete the ruin of the Kiu dynasty, which had already been so rudely shaken, while at the same time Tuli advanced into the province of Honan from the side of Shensi. Against this combined attack, the Kiu troops made a vigorous stand, but the skill and courage of the Mongols bore down every opposition and over a hecatomb of slaughtered foes, they captured Kai-Feng-Fu, the capital of their enemies. From the Kai-Feng-Fu the emperor fled to Juning Fu, whither the Mongols quickly followed. After sustaining a siege for some weeks, enduring all the horrors of starvation, the garrison submitted to the Mongols and at the same time the Emperor committed suicide by hanging."[f14] Not being satisfied with this, Ogadi in 1235 A. D. sent an army against the Sung Dynasty of China, south of the Yang-se-kiang and in Korea.

Having thus consummated his conquest in' eastern Asia, Ogadi turned his attention to western Asia.' In 1236 A. D. he invaded Georgia and Great Armenia capturing Tiflis and Kars and sent a large army under Batu his nephew in eastern Europe. Batu captured Bolgari, the capital city of the Bulgar.crossd the Volga and invaded Ryazan which fell on

the 21st of December 1237 and perpetrated such atrocities that " no eye remained open to weep for the dead." He carried Moscow which were followed by Vladimir and Kozelsk. Poland and Hungary were overtaken by the same fate.

Contemporaneous with the rise of the Mongols the Turks known as Ottomans were rising in power. They were one of those nomad tribes dwelling between the plains of Sungaria arid the desert of Gobi. " Legendassigns to Oghuz, son of Kara Khan, the honour of being the father of the Ottoman Turks. Their first appearance in history dates from A. D. 1227. In that year a horde, variously estimated at from two to four thousand souls, with their flocks and their Slalves driven originally from their central Asian homes by the pressure of Mongol invasion, and who had sought in vain a refuge with the Seljukian Sultan Ala-ud-din Kaikobad of Konia, were returning under their chief Suleiman Sha to their native land. They were crossing the Euphrates, not far from the castle of Jaber, when the drowning of their leader by accident threw confusion into their ranks. Those who had not yet crossed the river refused, in face of this omen, to follow their brethren. The little band numbering 400 warriors . . .. decided to remain under Ertoghrul, son of the drowned leader. Ertoghrul first camped at Jessin, East of Erzerum. A second appeal to Ala-ud-din was more successful and the numbers of the immigrants had become too insignificant for their presence to be a source of danger. The lands of Karajabagh, near Angora, were assigned to the new settlers, who found there good pasturage and winter quarters. The help afforded by Ertoghrul to the Seljukian monarch on a critical occasion led to the addition of Sugut to his fief, with which he was now formally invested. Here Ertogbrul died in 1288 at the age of ninety, being succeeded in the leadership of the tribe by his son Osman. When exhausted by the onslaughts of Ghazan Mahmud Khan, ruler of Tabriz, and one of Chengiz Khan's lieutenants, the Seljukian empire was at the point of dissolution, most of its feudatory vassals helped rather than hindered its downfall in the hope of retaining their fiefs as independent sovereigns. But Osman remained firm in his allegiance, and by repeated victories over the Greeks revived the drooping glories of his suzerain. His earliest conquest was Karoja Hissar (1295), where first the name of Osman was substituted for that of the sultan in the weekly prayer. In that year Ala-ud-din Kaikobad II conferred on him the proprietorship of the lands he had thus conquered by the sword and presented him at the same time with the horse-tail, drum and banner which constituted the insignia of independent command. Osman continued his victorious career against the Greeks, and by his valour and also through allying himself with Kensee Mikhal, lord of Harman Kaya, became master of Aineqeui, Bilejik and Yar Hissar . . . In 1300 the Seljuk empire crumbled away, and many small states arose on its ruins. It was only after the death of his protector and benefactor Sultan Ala-ud-din II that Osman declared his independence, and accordingly the Turkish historian dates the foundation of the Ottoman empire from this event. "[f15] The empire of the Turks was very extensive. " Turks ruled in Asia minor, Turks governed Egypt, Turks held minor authority under the

Mongols in Syria and Mesopotamia, while the descendants of Chengizkhan had succeeded to the dominion of the Kalifs: in Persia, had assumed all the dignity of sovereignty in the wild region of the Volga and the Ural mountains, in the lands of the 0xus,and the deserts of Tartary, had spread across central Asia and had founded an empire in China, and were preparing to establish the long line of Mongol emperors in Hindustan whom we know by the name of the Great Moguls."[f16]

But the power of the Turks for a time suffered a blow that seemed to end it once for all. " Just at the moment when the Sultan seemed to have attained the pinnacle of his ambition, when his authority was unquestioningly obeyed over the greater part of the Byzantine empire in Europe and Asia, when the Christian states were regarding him with terror as the scourge of the world, another and a greater scourge came to quell him, and at one stroke all the vast fabric of empire which Bayezid had so triumphantly erected was shattered to the ground and this terrible conqueror was Timur, the Tartar or as we call him " Tamurlane ". He established his superiority over the petty chiefs that had arisen out of the ruins of the vast kingdom of Chengizkhan. Tamurlane carried every thing at the point of sword and subdued every province that was under Bayezid. The Tartar and the Turk faced in 1402. As the Turks were engaged in laying seige to Constantinople, the Sultan heard of the news of the victory of Tamurlane over his troops at Siwas. Bayezid collected his troops and hurried to give battle in person but lost it at Angora and the edifice of the Turkish empire crumbled to pieces." [f17]Reared with consummate skill and maintained with the utmost bravery the Turkish empire succumbed before the " Asiatic Despot ", the embodiment of " the wrath of God ". " The history of the Ottomans seemed to have suddenly come to an end. Seldom has the world seen so complete, so terrible, a catastrophe as the fall of Bayezid from the summit of the power to the shame of a chained captive.[f18]

Unfortunately however Tamurlane did not survive to avail the fruits of his victory and his apparent stroke was far from being a final blow to the Ottoman empire. Mr. Lane Poole says " The most astonishing characteristic of the rule of the Turks is its vitality. Again and again its doom has been pronounced by wise prophets, and still it survives. Province after province has been cut off the empire, yet still the Sultan sits supreme over wide dominions, is revered or feared by subjects of many races. Considering how little of the great qualities of the ruler the Turk has often possessed, how little trouble he has taken to conciliate the subjects whom his sword has subdued, it is amazing

how firm has been his authority, how unshaken his power, . . . Within a dozen years the lost provinces were reunited under the strong and able rule of Mahammud I, and the Ottoman Empire far from being weakened by the apparently crushing blow it had received in 1402, rose stronger and more vigorous after his fall, and like a giant refreshed, prepared for new and bolder feats of conquest."[f19] Cheered up by brilliant prospects Mohammed transferred his capital from Brusa in Asia to Adrianople in Europe. The Seljuk Turks reached the Hellespont but it was left to the Ottomans to

cross it. Constantinople was the dream of many a Turkishruler. They had longed for the possession of that imperial city ever since Ottoman had dreamed that he grasped it in his hand. " Thunderbolt Bayezid had besieged it. Musa had pressed it hard. Murad n had patiently planned its conquest. There was little to be won beside the city itself, for all the province round about it had long been subdued by the Ottomans, but the wealth and beauty and the strength and position, of the capital itself were quite enough to make its capture the crowning ambition of the Turks." [f20] With eagerness Mahammud II the sixth of the Ottoman emperors was in watchful waiting for pretext to capture the city. Taking advantage of the hostility of the emperor he prepared to attack the city which fell on the 29th of May 1453. The withstanding of the city for such a long time rather than its fall constitute real wonder for "at this period the state of the Byzantine empire was such as to render its powers of resistance insignificant, indeed the length of time during which it held out against the Turks is to be attributed rather to the lack of efficacious means at the disposal of its assailants than to any qualities possessed by its defenders.'[f21] There is perhaps no place in the world more strategic than Constantinople in that it commands the three continents Asia, Europe and Africa, and whoever has had it, has enjoyed supremacy in all these three. Speaking of the physical strength of Constantinople and the attacks it has withstood Dr. Cunningham says, " As each century came, a new horde of invaders appeared. In the fourth century, immediately after its foundation, it was threatened by the Goths ; in the fifth, by Huns and Vandals ; in the sixth, by Slavs; these were succeeded by Arabs and Persians in the seventh, and Magyars, Bulgars and Russians in the eighth and ninth. Even after its prestige had been broken by the success of Venice and the Fourth Crusade, and the establishment of a Latin Kingdom, the restored empire was able to maintain a long resistance against the Turks. It had often been shaken, but not till 1453 did it utterly succumb."[f22]

It was a great fortune that this imperial city should have withstood these incessant attacks and should have conserved the wreck of the classical civilization. It was also a great fortune for the propagation of Christianity that the wave of Mohomedanism should have been checked long enough before Christianity to have become a real force in Europe. It bore the brunt of barbarism allowed the classic civilization to develop itself. What Constantinople did on the eastern side Tours did on the western side at a very early date, though not perhaps so brilliantly. Being disappointed in their attempt to take Constantinople the Arabs long before the Turks succeeded in taking it, deployed to the South and carrying their religion triumphantly through Africa thought of entering Europe from the western side through Gibralter. Here in their preliminary advance they met with little opposition for the kingdom of the West, Goths could hardly defend itself against their masterful onrush and by 711 A. D. Spain- fell into the hands of the Arabs and the Babers and was flooded with Moorish immigrants. Encouraged by success the Arabs thought of crossing over into Gaul but were held in check by the Duke of Aquilaine who however was defeated near Bordeaux in 732. With redoubled energy they advanced to

Poiturs and marched for Tours. But here they dashed against a stronger enemy. The Franks under Charles, the Hammer (Mortel) defeated the Arabs at Tours and thus permanently stayed their advance. The Arabs never more made any attempts to cross the Pyrenees. What would have been the fate of European civilization had the Arabs succeeded in subjugating it, is hard to speculate. This much is certain that the Moors were, far in advance of the Franks. Prof. Robinson says, "Historians *commonly* regard it as a matter of great good luck that Charles, the Hammer and his barbarus soldiers succeeded in defeating and driving back the Mohomedans at Tours. But had they been permitted to settle in Southern France they might have developed science and art more rapidly than did the Franks."[f23]

While these rapid movements of the Asiatic nomads were upsetting all peaceful activities in central Asia the Roman empire was fast crumbling into decay and Europe fell back into a dull lull broken only by the incessant warfare of the Germanic people.

Under these circumstances commerce was bound to decline. There were innumerable hindrances to mediaeval commerce. Rapidity of exchange was greatly hindered by the lack of money all throughout western Europe. Christianity was anything but an optimistic religion, it was a protest against the comforts of life. Economics was held down by religion. The doctrine of "just price" and the prohibition of whole sale trade greatly depressed commerce. The greatest hindrance that was put in the way of commercial activity was the Christian doctrine of usury. In one sweep the entire mass of people was prohibited to loan money at interest. When combined with the scarcity of money we can realize the retrograding character of this prohibition. The Jews not being within the pale of Christianity were the only people left to 'deal in monetary transaction and their service to economics is immeasurable. " This ill-starred people played a most impor*tant* part in the Economic development of Europe, but they were terribly maltreated by the Christians, who held them guilty of the supreme crime of putting Christ to death." [f24]Added to all these were the annoying transit duties arbitrary in their character. The geographic knowledge of the time was bewilderingly miserable. Dangers of the sea were by no means small and the pirates were the source of constant dread. To crown all the most effective hindrance was the dilapidation of the Roman roads.

Under the combined force of these unfavourable circumstances

there is no wonder that since the fall of the Roman Empire, there prevailed in Western Europe a long lull and a dull monotony of

static life.

Constantinople did not pay much attention to commerce. Its policy was that of extortion. It never cared to achieve to the full the gains due to its situation on the Bosphorus. There was very little trade between the West and Constantinople military operation constituted the only stimulus to trade activities. (Space left blank-ed.)

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Nay the rule of the Saracens in Syria and Egypt was far more enlightened than that of

the contemporary rulers of the Byzantine Empire.

But amidst all this ruin Italy conserved the mercantile and intellectual forces of the middle ages. The 9th century A. IX marks *the* rise of real mercantile activity in the North-East and South-West of Italy. It was the Era of the rise of the Italian City-Republic and Eastern commerce was the thing upon which they fed themselves fat. Each city-state rose to hold " The Gorgeous East in fee."

First and foremost is Amalfi. It wrested its independence from the Eastern Empire by 820. Her maritime activity grew so rapidly that within 20 years their navy was powerful enough to fight the Saracens in their naval attacks on Rome. Her factories (agencies of modern days) were scattered in Palermo, Syracuse, Messina, Durazzo and Constantinople and her reputation as a commercial state grew so wide-spread that, " The maritime laws of *Tabula Amalfitana* were current among traders on every coast of the Inland Sea and the coinage of the Republic was the chief medium of exchange between Latin Europe and the Levout."[f25]

The smallness of the harbour prevented Amalfi from being a great emporium. She therefore had to give way to her rivals. She fell prey to the land powers of the Normans who had subdued Naples, Salerno or Brindisi while the sea power was immeasurably outdone by other and better situated city states.

Venice rose as Amalfi went down. "From the time of Charlemagne the Queen of the Adriatic began to take a place in the politics as well as in the commerce of the Latine world. Its situation had advantages beyond any other harbour town of Italy. Separated from the mainland by the sea and from the open sea by the low fringing walls of its lagoons, surrounded almost entirely by shallows pierced only by a few deep channels, Venice was usually considered by its own citizens, as by foreigners, to be beyond attack. The political troubles of the continent made it a refuge from the time of Attila, and the absence of any maritime rival on the adriadc left open a valuable and extensive field of operations for commerce, for colonization and even for conquest."[f26] Her benevolent neutrality and her allegiance to Byzantine greatly augmented her prosperity for on the decline of the Eastern Empire the whole adriadc coast came under her influence and the chief markets of Byzantine coast, Antioch, Inopuesda, Adana, Tarsus, Attalia, Strobilos Chios, Ephisus and Phoeacea Hiraclea and Selymbria, Chrysopolis, Demetrias, Adrianople, Athens, Thebes, Thissalonica, Negropont, Corinth Corfus, Durazzo etc. were opened for Venician trade. Her commercial policy was very farsighted and wise. She laid down the rule " of siding always with the stronger, especially in maritime struggle " and practised it on many an occasion and this by crushing all her enemies and ingratiating herself into the favour of the strong achieved her greatness.

Genoa, another city state came late to share in the oriental trade. 1097 A. D. marks her rise. "The origin of the state as an independent body may be found in a *Campagna* or political association, founded at the very close of the eleventh century, controlled by

consuls freely elected and supported by the bishops of the city against secular lords, such as Oberti[f27]

From 1097 to 1122 she secured important trading concessions and established factories both on the Levantine Coast as well as on the African. Her trade extended to Egypt through Alexandria, to Tunis and to the Southern Coast towns of France and Spain.

Origin of Pisa which is similar in nature to that of Genoa dates from 1085. By deeds of arms she succeeded in securing commercial privileges from the Moslems and from the Byzantine Empire. Her commerce was so great that " Western orthodoxy was shocked by the " marine monsters " from the ends of the Earth who thronged the streets of the city; Pagans, Turks, Libyans, Parthians and Chaldeans defiled the town and blackened (her) walls : here, most of all, was to be seen the triumph of commercialism over all the barriers of Latin exclusiveness over, race, religion and language alike."[f28] None of the Republics secured more concessions and privileges than Pisa and her maritime activity though short was brilliant.

The commercial activity of these Republics while in their infancy was greatly fostered by the crusades. We are not at all concerned with the military aspects of the crusades though they were perhaps the greatest of military exploits of the time. The commercial aspect of the crusade is what demands our attention.

The sea had its dangers and fears. [f29] Hardly any one tried to take a chance. " In that age it might truly be said that no landman went to sea unless obliged to do so, for a voyage was being in prison with the addition charge of being drowned. " [f30] The importance of water transportation was however demonstrated to the crusaders by the wearisome experience of the landways used in the first Crusade (1096-99) ; and the marine transportation was in the hands of these Italian Republics. The Crusaders therefore began to indent more and more upon these republics who fed fat on this growing commerce.

" By serving the cause of Christendom they (the Republics) served their own. They multiplied, many times over, their carrying trade; they largely increased their export and import commerce. Above all, they acquired a privileged, a more than half political, position on the coasts of the Levant, as time went on, they became more indispensable to the crusading princes, they were able to dictate their terms more freely until the main burden of the Holy war rested upon them as the chief holders of power." [f31] The Crusades seem to have been looked upon with different perspectives. The Catholic Church had a double motive which is well manifested in the words of St. Bernard, respecting the soldiers of the 2nd crusades, when he says, " In that countless multitude you will find few except the utterly wicked and impious, the sacrilegious, homicides, and perjurers, whose departure is a double gain. Europe rejoices to lose them and Palestine to gain them: They are useful in both ways, in their absence from here and their presence there." [f32]The discontented noble, the restless who was eager to shun

responsibilities and the criminal and the sinful had their points of view of the crusades and the objectives as had the religiously devout and 'naturally romantic. But " the cunning traders and sea men of the commercial republics looked on the crusaders with very different eyes from the average catholic lords and labourers of the inland districts : they were not without religious enthusiasm but they cultivated it rather as a useful commodity than as an inevitable state of feeling; and they felt but little of the blind hatred against Islam, and the passionate veneration for the Gospel sites, which sincerely animated the great body of the warriors and pilgrims they conveyed to Palesttine. Merchantile interest was never absent from the minds of those who governed, bought, or sold in Venice and Pisa, in Genoa and Amalfi."[f33]The results of the Crusades were contrary to expectation. They achieved what was perhaps never intended by the Crusaders and the gain was by no means small. " The heyday of the crusading power on land was also the heyday of the maritime prosperity of many western cities : and at the conclusion of the religious wars the main results of the struggle was to be found in the expansion of the Christian trade, and in the assimilation of no small part of oriental and moorish civilization. For the meeting of east and west in this tremendous conflict brought little permanent gain to Europe and the Catholic world, in the political sense : Through the medium of commerce, on the other hand it directed the energies of the Christian nations to their true future. The frontal attack of the crusaders was unsuccessful, but the crusading struggle imported a new culture and material prosperity, an increased knowledge, an immensely extended wealth, a restless but obstinate ambition, whose results were seen in the Renaissance of the the fifteenth and sixteenth century in the great discoveries both of geography and natural science and in the final triumph of European arms and enterprise throughout the world." [f34] The above may strike as an exaggerated description of the enduring effects of the Crusades but there is no doubt that they imparted a liberal education to the Europeans and fostered trade by giving a permanent footing to merchants inlands where the dominions of the Christian rulers had been destroyed.

The Italian Republics were immensely rewarded for their help to the Crusaders. Besides many privileges each one acquired " spheres of influence " exclusive of the other anticipating the modern " Spheres of influence " in China. They all rivalled each other for the control of the marts behind the Levants. " The Moselm hinterland to the Crusading Syria possessed four chief markets—Aleppo, Damascus, Hems or Emesa, and Hawath, beyond which lay the still greater marts of Bagdad and the lesser Emporia of Mosul and Bassora or Basra converging the line of the Tigris, Aleppo was a head centre of the trade route from the Abbasside Caliph's ' metropolis ' to AntiocLand Laodiceaon the western side. This route. . . Edrisi calls the great avenue of the trade of Irak, Persia and Khorasan, and the silk market of Allepi proved its connection with the still more distant countries of the Far East. Even at the close of the thirteenth century many Venetian traders were residents here for the sake of commerce in *Seric* goods, as

well as in *alum.* The figments and the pepper found at Antioch by the Crusaders, on the capture of the city, also bore witness to an Indian commerce with the Mediterranean by this path, and the elder Sanuto is probably right when he says (at the beginning of the 14th cen.) That in the' old time most Oriental goods passed along this way to the Roman Sea." [f35] The rapid movement of troops by Saracens and the Christians did not materially affect the Red sea route to India and Alexandria continued to be the " market of two worlds."

These Italian Republics secured the Oriental commodities and started commerce with " ultra-montane lands in the north of the continent and became " the European stapes of Mediterranean track." The north was practically in a semi-barbarous condition. The commercial activity in the Baltic was meagre. The Viking was a " half merchant and half pirate ". "So far as we can gather. . . this commercial activity (in the north) was different from that of the Phoenicians and their Greek initiators in two important particulars. It was much less completely organized. The Phoenicians had settled factories at special points, and there were permanent off-shoots of the mother-city in distant lands, and had recognised rights and obligations. But the horse commerce does not appear to have arisen between towns and colonies. The Viking was rather the adventurer who went out to improve his fortunes as best he might, and who it be found a favourable opportunity, established himself on an estate. The Horsemen may have had more aptitude for town life than some of the other Teutons, but they were ready to become cultivators and colonists, and did not confine their energies and trade."[f36] Nay before their conversion to Christianity, the Horsemen were a great menace to peaceful commerce. Considerably after the conversion of the Horsemen to Christianity signs peaceful commerce began to show among the Flemish towns. This had much to do with the wool productions in England. English was exchanged for Flemish fabrics. The Flemish dealers had organized themselves into what is known as " Flemish House of London " and controlled the trade through the" staple " towns. Beyond Flanders the German trade was controlled by the German House. It was a close confederation of a large number of towns of northern Germany. This German Hanseatic League was the most extended commercial Organisation of middle ages. It gathered the products of the Baltic lands, such as lumber, tar, salt, iron, silver, salted and smoked fish, furs, ambers and certain coarse manufactures which it exchanged for goods brought by the commercial cities of Italy from far off lands. Thus through the agency of these Italian Republics, " the products of Arabia and Persia, India and the East Indian Islands, and even of China, all through the middle ages, as in antiquity, made their way by long and difficult routes to Western Europe. Silk and Cotton, both raw and manufactured into fine goods, indigo and other dyestuffs, aromatic woods and gums, narcotics and other drugs, pearls, rubies, diamonds, sapphires, turquoises, and other precious stones, gold and silver, and above all the edible spices, pepper, ginger cinnamon, cloves, and all-spice, could be obtained only in Asia." [f37] Thus the commerce between Asia and Europe formed a

regular living system and was fed by various channel.

But this system was early disturbed by the rise of Islam. When we imagine that trade was carried on by land Caravans with all the cumbersomeness we can imagine the hindrances it must have underwent owing to the rapid military movements of the Saracens We will recall that there were four principal trade routes from Asia to Europe and they all lay through the dominions of the Saracens. " During the Crusades, so long as the avenue by the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea were controlled by hostile Mohomedan powers, it became necessary to adopt another more expensive and circuitous route, requiring much land-carriage and several transfers of freight. This route led up the Indus, across the mountains on beasts of burden, thence by the Oxus, and so to the Caspian Sea. This, which was ancient route, was now adopted by Venice and Genoa. From the Caspian it took especially the direction of the Volga, to a place called Zarizn, thence through the country to the Don, where, at the river's mouth, in the town of Tana, now Azor, both Venice and Genoa had commercial privileges, and the former had a consul from the end of the 12th century. Afterwards an important entrepot for Genoa was Theodosia, now Jatta, in the Crimea." [f38]" Islam had hemmed Christendom on every side. On the East as on the South, the Crescentraised a barrier against the advance of the Cross." [f39] But in this mighty struggle of the Crescent and the Cross commerce suffered immensely. " The Ottoman seizure or obstruction of the Indian trade routes brought disaster not alone to the Mediterranean republics. The blow fell first on Genoa and Venice, but it sent a shock through the whole system of European commerce. The chief channel by which the products of Asia reached the central and northern nations of Christendom was the Hanseatic League."[f40] The Hanseatic had profited mainly owing to its control of Oriental wares coming through Italian Republics. From very early times "Germany and the north Italian upland were dependent on the Republic (Venice) for the products of the east, and when 1017 of ([f41]) ships laden with spices suffered shipwreck, the event is noticed by a (*[f42]) chronicler as a serious misfortune." [f43]" The Indian trade formed an important contributory to this Hanseatic commerce. When the eastern traffic began to dry up, its European emporiums declined." 3[f44] In this blockade of old trade routes lies the (*[f45]) expansion of western Europe. The whole situation is well summed up by Prof. A. F. Poland when (*[f46]) as to why America was discovered towards the end of the fifteenth century, he says, (*[f47]) would be the paradoxical assertion that Columbus discovered America in 1492 or there abouts because the Turks are an obstructive people. The connection is not quite obvious, but obvious connections are always superficial, and this is more profound. The Germans have a proverb *Dermensch est was arisst*— man is what he eats. It might be (*[f48]) for a motto by those people. (This seems to be incomplete—ed.)